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Anti-Poverty War Is Getting Costly

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Mr. Allen

The widely controversial anti-poverty program is under heavy fire on the ground it's doing little for those who need it most, but there are juicy pickings for some beneficiaries.

The program has more high-salaried officials and employees than much older and larger government agencies—such as the FBI and the Office of Education.

This latest critical disclosure has been brought to light by Representative William Ayres, O., ranking Republican on the House Labor Committee which is considering the new \$1.6 billion anti-poverty budget. After lengthy inquiry, he compiled the following revealing facts:

—Approximately half (1,006, of 2,350) of the full-time employees in the Washington headquarters of the Office of Economic Opportunity, which runs the anti-poverty program, and its six regional branches are paid more than \$10,000 a year.

—At least 24 of OEO's top Washington officials receive more than the \$23,268 base pay of General Westmoreland, U. S. commander in Viet Nam.

—Of the 2,350 full-time employees, six get more than \$28,000, including Director Sargent Shriver at \$30,000; 18 more than \$25,000; 54 over \$19,600; and 521 upwards of \$14,680.

In addition to these lush salary scales, OEO now has choice working conditions. In Washington it's housed in one of the newest and most modern buildings.

Representative Ayres caustically notes these eye-opening figures are only part of the story.

There are two other large groups of flourishing anti-poverty officials and employees whose salaries are paid in whole or in part by the federal government.

One consists of 4,134 permanent government workers assigned to anti-poverty projects—such as Job Corps camps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps and adult education. These employees come from departments such as Labor, Agriculture, Interior, HEW, etc.

Detailed salary figures of the group are not available. But significantly indicative of their cost to OEO is that \$31.75 million budgeted for their pay in the coming fiscal year.

The other group is employees of local poverty organizations

97 Job Corps camps, 15 are operated by universities and business firms under contract to OEO. Employees hired by them are paid with government funds, but there are no public records of salary schedules.

Similarly, local community action anti-poverty projects employ many officials and workers whose salaries are almost entirely paid by OEO. But again, salary data is vague and incomplete.

However, Ayres has ascertained that the scales are well in keeping with OEO's upper brackets.

At least 1,032 community action employees are paid more than \$10,000 a year, and 200 get \$15,000 or better.

This lush payroll empire is branded by Representative Ayres as "scandalous" and "indefensible."

He also indignantly predicts that under the proposed new \$1.6 billion anti-poverty budget, the number of officials getting \$10,000 and more will increase to well over 2,500.

"Bureaucrats and politicians are having a field day," says Ayres. "We have no idea how many poor people have been helped by this program, but it's unmistakably clear that thousands of bureaucrats and politicians are being maintained far above the poverty level."

This record, Ayres contends, clashes directly with the promise Director Shriver made in 1964 to the Labor Committee—"The war on poverty is a prudent program. It is prudently planned in that every dollar allocated will be spent to help the poor. There will be no leakage. There is no contemplated huge new bureaucracy."

Snorting in derision, Ayres disclosed that Shriver boasted to the Labor Committee earlier this year that OEO does not have a large staff.

"He said it was only one-fifth the size of the Department of Health, Education & Welfare," said Ayres. "So I compared OEO with one agency of that department—the Office of Education. And here is what I found. The Education Office is budgeted for \$3.478 billion in fiscal 1967, as compared to \$1.724 billion for OEO. Yet Education has only 2,861 full-time employees, while OEO has an overall total